

Felix Gutierrez: Very good! We say in California, be bilingual, it will be by yourself, so congratulations on the Spanish and thank you to the Eisenhower Commission, Foundation for inviting us here for what really has been a very rich day and a very rich dialogue that I hope will not end here, but will lead to some other very important things.

Well, I'm from Southern California, but everybody seems to be starting out with a Chicago story so I'll go back into my history and pull one out which is relevant to the Kerner Commission, our topic.

Forty years ago, this year, I was a graduate student working on my Master's degree at the Medaille School of Journalism at Northwestern University which is just outside of Chicago. I had gone there in the hopes that I could become a journalist. I'd gone to my undergraduate school as a commuter student and Cal State Los Angeles, earned my degree there, earned a teaching credential, but I'd always wanted to be a reporter and I'd worked on the school paper all four years that I was an undergraduate and edited it when it was chosen best paper in California. So with that in bank I said, Well, maybe now I can get a journalism degree, and maybe there would be some opportunity. Growing up in Los Angeles there were almost no journalists of color that I could identify in print, media, and none at all in broadcast media, except for the Spanish language station.

So, I went to Northwestern in the hopes that perhaps a brown person with a white degree might have a chance of getting into a, what appeared to me to be an all white profession. And I did go. I did take the classes. I did do well. I did graduate although my last semester, last quarter, we had urban reporting and they divided us into different assignments and the first half of the quarter I had the Federal Building, which was a big assignment. Everybody wanted it, courts, cops, things like that, hearings and such. And the next semester, the next half, you had to pick and they picked by lottery and I got a low number. And my number in the lottery meant by the time I got there, there weren't very many choices left. Well the one I wanted from the very beginning was, had to do with race and ethnicity and I was sure by the time it got down to my low number that would be gone because somebody would obviously take what I thought was a pretty good story. Well it wasn't.

So, when it got to my number I took it and I got race and ethnicity in Chicago. And I still remember right after I picked it a student came up to me and said, Gee Felix, I'm sorry there wasn't very much left when it was time for you to pick your story, your beat area, but you know I had this last time, here's a few names. It's kind of like a consolation prize to have to worry about race and ethnicity.

Well, I did graduate, but I didn't get a job. I could find no job, I had a teaching credential and a Master's degree and I could find no job anywhere where I could do and practice what I had learned on a full-time basis. I went back to Los Angeles in 1967, went to work at the local college that I'd gone to working in community things and became a public relations person for the pickets protests, marches, demonstrations, other things that were taking place at that time to try to get some racial justice in the society and worked for an underground newspaper.

I still remember on March 1, 1968 when the Kerner Commission Report came out and somebody told me, Hey, there's something in there about journalism. And I looked at it, I read the story, I said, Yeah, there is, you know, can't find anybody qualified. Looking

for people, but can't find them qualified and hope that perhaps that might open a small door.

Well, it didn't, not in the media at least. Race then, and in the Kerner Commission Report, was defined as black and white. It wasn't true then and it's less true now, but I did get a job with the Anti-Poverty Program and for a year worked on getting press coverage for anti-poverty efforts in the Los Angeles area. And after those two years, still they said they were looking, but I couldn't find any opening, decided that if I could not make an impact in the newsroom, maybe I could make an impact on the newsroom and decided to become a journalism professor and went on and got the requisite degrees.

The media reaction to the Kerner Commission was very interesting. It looked at things that needed to be done and for the first time in -- that I can note -- race became an issue for the media even though media had long been an issue for the race. We had long concerns about the way we were being covered or not covered, being portrayed or not portrayed.

Our next book, which I'm doing with Clint Wilson and Lena Chow, Clint from Howard, documents the long history for racial justice in the media and we go back to the 1800s and finding articles that will say, you know, we're not being treated fairly, we're not being treated as we should.

But the Kerner Commission did wake people up that the media were not innocent bystanders, but were players and they reflected the racism just as much as any other institution in society. So there was, initially, much needed attention to diversity inclusion, first in broadcasting because of the federal regulation of broadcasting and then in print. We saw a lot of what I call catch-up journalism.

I showed all my students a Life Magazine cover from 1967-68 saying, called The Return of the Red Man as though the Native Americans all disappeared and now they were coming back in the 1960s. They had an issue on Black History with Frederick Douglas on the cover. These are communities that existed for a long time, but then had been ignored by the media and so they were trying to catch up.

The Kerner Commission said, We need to improve coverage, and then focused on the lack of representation of blacks -- or Negroes, as the Commission used the term at that time -- in newsrooms. In the end though, what happened was the media paid more attention to the numbers than to the coverage.

Maybe because it's quantifiable, maybe because you can count it, and measure it, and such. Employment became the means to the -- it was supposed to be the means to the end -- but employment became the end and we've heard several speakers today count the statistics in terms of media employment, less so on media coverage. In 1978, 10 years later, we had the Look Back Conferences on what had been accomplished in the last 10 years after the Kerner Commission Report. It was significant, I think, that in that year that the American Society of Newspaper Editors, under a great deal of pressure from the Institute of Journalism Education and other groups, said that they would try to achieve racial parity in the newsroom by the year 2000. It took 10 years for them to even set a goal that they said they wanted to reach even if, in fact, they did not.

We look for ways to get people in and to make them effective. The media valued us for our diversity and our differences in getting stories, but not in the newsroom. We made the analogy at the time. They want you to be home boys when you go out to cover the story and good old boys when you get back to the newsroom. And that split personality is a tough life to lead. We Latinos said, Yeah, I got the job, but I'm covering the taco beat, meaning everything that happens on the Mexican side I get to cover and a lot of it I would, but if it's a good story anybody should cover it. And there's other things I could cover. We found that numbers did not necessarily equate automatically to progress. Without a tenor, without a tone, without a supportive environment and some corporations did manifest that you would not bring the coverage that you wanted.

Well, today, we're looking back almost 40 years and we find that the media have changed in terms of answering the question that you have before us. They're moving from mass media, which was the tenor of the 1960s, to class media, not class in terms of social class, but class in terms of classifications of audience.

Look at your cable channels, each channel different kind of content, different segment, different pinpoint they're trying to get. Movie shows the same things, magazines have gone the same way. Radio stations, each one targeted a different demographic. As media have gone from mass to class, we've seen less attention to those things that the media moguls feel will not be attractive to the people they're trying to reach.

And at the same time, in 1978, when ASNE was setting its goal of racial inclusiveness, Ben Bad Dickie of the UC Berkeley School of Journalism wrote an article on how the media were avoiding the inner-city, how they were jumping to the suburbs in order to get more desirable readers. In my home town of Los Angeles, Otis Chandler -- then the editor, the publisher of the Los Angeles Times -- actually said when asked by an interviewer that, No, his paper did not attract Latinos and blacks, he said, it's too complicated for us, that we were not desirable to their readers. They were trying export the newspaper two counties away from Los Angeles rather than sell it three blocks from where the paper was being sold.

So they went from mass to class and segmented out the more economically viable demographics, they left a lot of us out and a lot of behind.

We've had two results. One, is that when we're covered now, it's the zoo stories. We're people who are on display. They love us during Cinco de Mayo, they love us during Chinese New Year. If you have an Indian Pow Wow somebody will probably show up, but we're on display. We live on, you know, different days of the year besides those things. All the Kwanza stories will be coming up now right after Christmas, so, you all know that. And then Black History Month, they'll save the other stories so they get into Black History Month.

Secondly, we're covered as problem people. We're either causing problems or beset by problems. We're either causing problems for the larger society or beset by problems of our own indigenous cultures or make up or whatever. Or even the success stories, they had to overcome some kind of problem. It's rare that I read a story about an African-American who's been successful without some reference to a fatherless childhood, living in the ghetto, gang this, drug that, or something like that as though this was part of their life or everybody's life. Well, that's just not the case.

Second result, and this is the wrap-up --

Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich: Okay.

Felix Gutierrez: -- we're moving into the rise of class media. Media used to look at society and say, We're all diverse. How can we bring you all together? How can the NBC News get everybody to watch? Now it meant that some of us were represented stereotypically or not at all, but at least there was that outreach trying to get us in. Now the media look at a diverse society and say, How can I reinforce those differences? How can I target segment and market to a specific demographic? It may be based on language. It may be based on age. It may be based on race, music preference, whatever it is. How can I split people up? Instead of media bringing people together, they now look for ways to divide us out.

And as you look ahead at your recommendations from this August Foundation, we need to look at not only the racial realities and the poverty realities, but also the media realities. We could successfully integrate newspapers, but at the time that they're circulations are declining, we'd reach less, general circulation dailies, you would reach less people than if you were to look at other types of media that people are using.

Thank you.